

When a Christian Suffers Persecution - Part 3 - Acts 24:11-17 – January 31st, 2010

- This is part three of a series titled; "When a Christian Suffers Persecution," as we've studied how Paul is persecuted on trial for his faith.

1. Be courageous (Verse 1)

- Even though he's faced with a powerful prosecution against him, Paul is courageous because of the promise the Lord made to him.

2. Be genuine (Verses 2-4)

- Tertullus, the prosecuting attorney, makes his opening arguments and is as flattering as he is disingenuous towards the Governor Felix.

3. Be truthful (Verses 5-9)

- Absolutely nothing they say about Paul is true and in fact every charge against him is a blatant lie and false accusation based on rumor.

4. Be respectful (Verse 10)

- When Paul speaks to Felix, there is no flattery or insincerity however there is respect. Paul respects the office of governor, not the man.

5. Be prudent (Verses 11-13)

11 You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12 My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. 13 And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me.

- v11 Paul tells Felix that it could've been easily verified that all he did was go up to Jerusalem to worship because it had been 12 days.

- v12 He then goes on to say that his accusers have not presented any evidence that he argued or stirred up a crowd at the temple.

- v13 He very clearly states that the prosecution has not and cannot prove to the Governor that any of the charges against him are true.

- Paul is as diligent as he is prudent in arguing his case. This is evidenced in his opening statement that it had been a period of 12 days.

- There are three reasons that this beautifully demonstrates Paul's brilliance, diligence and prudence in how he presents the evidence:

1. He went to Jerusalem as a visitor to worship, not argue, riot, or stir up a crowd while in the synagogue. There's simply no motive.

2. He was in protective custody for some of the 12 days that he was there and wouldn't have had time to do what he's being accused of.

3. He had been there for 12 days, and if he was guilty, surely the prosecution could have presented at least one witness to testify.

- Question; "how did the Apostle Paul know what to say?" The Lord gave him in that moment the prudent and perfect words to say.

Matthew 10:16-20 16 I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. 17 "Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. 18 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. NIV

6. Be scriptural (Verses 14-16)

14 However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, 15 and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. 16 So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

- v14 Paul rounds a corner in his legal defense and tells Felix that he worships the God of their fathers and is a follower of the Way.

- v15 After saying that his beliefs agree with the Law and what's written in the Prophets, he tells Felix he has the hope of the resurrection.

- v16 He goes on to say that because his hope in God is the same as these men accusing him, he strives to keep a clear conscience.

- In other words, Paul is admitting guilt in so much as he is a follower of the way, which his accusers call a cult, or in their words, "a sect."

- It's not so much what Paul says, it's how Paul says what he says. In effect he's saying that if he's guilty of anything, it's being scriptural.

- He's a believer in the scriptures, He's a follower of Jesus, and He's a preacher of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, then, resurrected.

One commentator wrote: "These are the things of which I am guilty," said Paul. "I'm a follower of the Way. I'm a believer in the Scriptures. I'm waiting for the Resurrection." Another commentator wrote: "Paul confessed his absolute faith in divine revelation, in the Law and the Prophets, and that he had taken his stand on the Hebrew Bible."

- It is absolutely critical for us when we find ourselves the recipients of hardship, suffering and persecution, to stand on the Word of God.

7. Be benevolent (Verse 17)

17 "After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings.

- v17 Paul then tells Felix that after being gone for several years, he came to Jerusalem to bring financial gifts as offerings for the poor.

- Paul is referring to the collection he had received for the impoverished churches in Jerusalem. This was another reason he went there.

- I believe that at this point Felix is beginning to see the authenticity of the Apostle Paul's faith. Paul's benevolence is the "real deal."

- As one commentator put it: "This certainly did not sound like a man coming to cause sedition and strife. No doubt Felix was astute enough to realize that Paul could produce ample witnesses of the fact that he had brought largess to Jerusalem."

- During difficult times of suffering hardship and persecution, the tendency in our Christian faith is to get all we can and can all we get.

- Being benevolent is the last thing on our minds or hearts, and if the truth be known, we need those monies to pay for our legal defense.

- What makes Paul even more benevolent is that those to whom he brought those gifts are nowhere to be found to testify on his behalf.